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## **NARCOTICS TASK FORCE RECOGNIZED**

BISMARCK – Drug agents usually go unnoticed, but members of the Metro Area Narcotics Task Force (MANTF) recently received national recognition for their efforts.

Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem announced the Bismarck drug task force agents received the Outstanding Cooperative Effort Award from the federal Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program and Office of National Drug Control Policy.

“Drugs don’t stop at the county line. It takes a cooperative team effort using every available state and local resource to stamp out drugs and drug dealers, said Stenehjem. “Making North Dakota safer by getting drugs off the street is the top priority for the state’s narcotics task force members, and it’s a job they do well.”

The Bismarck narcotics task force is comprised of agents and officers from the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Mandan Police Department, Bismarck Police Department, Morton County Sheriff’s Department, Burleigh County Sheriff’s Department, North Dakota Parole and Probation, North Dakota Army National Guard, and North Dakota Highway Patrol.

David Barton, Director of Midwest HIDTA, presented the individual and agency awards. Governor John Hoeven and Stenehjem participated in the award ceremony, which recognized the tremendous cooperation among law enforcement agencies in the state’s effort to combat illegal drug activity.

“The North Dakota Highway Patrol and Bureau of Criminal Investigation working together with local police departments and county sheriff’s offices play a vital role in efforts to combat drug trafficking in North Dakota,” said Gov. John Hoeven. “The intense efforts and skills of our state’s law enforcement professionals ensure that our state remains the safest in America, and that our citizens, especially our children, are protected from the dangers of illegal drugs.”

A simple traffic stop by North Dakota Highway Patrol Trooper Iverson resulted in a Task Force investigation, which developed into a covert operation lasting several months. During the course of the operation, the task force members identified major cocaine and heroin trafficking organizations and a drug distribution network operating in the area. Midwest HIDTA attributed the disruption of a national drug trafficking network to the arrests brought about by the Task Force during this operation.

The covert operations resulted in the arrest of several drug trafficking suspects, including two individuals connected to trafficking more than eighteen pounds of heroin and multiple pounds of cocaine every week in the Northwest.